



RECTORY NEWS

FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF CARSHALTON OLD RECTORY

Editor: Sue Horne

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The Barbarians are in Charge

Back in May, after the Landmark Trust declined to take on the Old Rectory, we had a meeting to discuss the future of the building with the three Carshalton Central ward councillors, Christopher Rhodes of the council's Assets Management and Cllr. Sunita Gordon.* Cllr. Gordon was present to add the council's

financial perspective to the discussion. The council's view was that, given their financial position, the Old Rectory's future could be best secured by selling the building to a private or commercial buyer to turn back into a house. We argued that, given the size of the building, its probable condition, and the limited amount of

private space around it, such a project was either unviable or only marginally so. We pointed out that there was a huge risk of the building being acquired by someone who didn't understand the complexity of the conversion and necessary restoration, resulting in the project collapsing and being left in limbo.

They argued that the Grade II* listing conferred robust protection and that the buyers would be carefully selected to ensure they were capable of delivering the project. Listing – particularly a high listing such as Grade II* - does confer a significant degree of protection but it is not without its limitations, particularly if the development fails. In that case the choice would be to either abandon the building or carry out a compulsory purchase. The latter would probably be very expensive and leave the council well out of pocket.

The meeting concluded with the councillors saying that their financial position left them with little choice except selling and that they would take a report to Strategy Committee. We said we recognised their difficulties but could not support the sale.

We had assumed that the next strategy meeting would be early in October following the snap general election which had closed down all council business. Without our knowledge, the report on the sale of the Old Rectory went to Strategy in July and we somehow missed it.

In the officer's report submitted to the committee at that meeting, it says that: **“due diligence would be undertaken on buyers and their resources as well as expertise to refurbish the Old Rectory. The future use and maintenance of the property would be in the**

hands of a new owner but with the protection of its heritage status. These issues would be considered carefully before entering into any binding commitment to sell”.

The formal decision by the Strategy Committee ignored this. The Assistant Director (Asset Management and Capital Delivery) was simply instructed to: **“take all steps necessary to effect the sale of the Property in the event of a satisfactory proposal coming forward”.**

The legal section of the report states that: **“the Local Government Act 1972 empowers local authorities to dispose of land for best consideration reasonably obtainable and this report seeks to authorise the disposal on that basis”.** In other words, it is the money that matters.

All further decision-making was delegated to the Strategic Director for Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources: the money people. Why did our local Carshalton Councillors agree to this? The only votes against came from the opposition councillors.

CORA has opposed the sale of the house for the last nine years. Many promises have been made and assurances given both by the ruling Liberal Democrat Council and various officials - all of which have proved to be just hot air. They clearly have little regard for this rare historic property and its long term survival.

I fear even more for the future of the Old Rectory.

John Phillips
Chairman
CORA

* Cllr. Sunita Gordon is a Beddington and Wallington councillor and sits on the following committees: Beddington and Wallington Local Committee; Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee (Substitute), Pension Board, Senior Officer Appointment Committee, Strategy and Resources Committee, Sutton Shareholdings Board (Chair)

Sold to the Highest Bidder Britain's Historic Buildings

In an interesting article in the Guardian of 26th May, Rowan More wrote about the sale of many of our iconic buildings to the private sector by councils and government. He asked: 'should pieces of the nation's soul ever be put up for sale?' Among a long list where this has already happened are two famous London buildings: Admiralty Arch and the old War Office. These grand and historic ministry buildings have been developed as luxury hotels for the super-rich. More says: 'It's hard to imagine other major countries being so cavalier with their past'.

The same sell-off of historic buildings is happening around the country. The Municipal Buildings in Liverpool, described by the Victorian Society as a 'magnificent community asset', have become yet another private hotel and spa. Bankrupt Nottingham city council was said to be considering selling Nottingham Castle and the Elizabethan Wollaton Hall.

One wonders if councils even question the logic of selling these treasures or consider what happens when the last of their valuables have been traded. The infamous sale of items from the Riesco collection by Croydon council didn't save

the council from bankruptcy.

The director of the Victorian Society thinks that when more modest historic local buildings are sold to the private sector it matters. He sees these buildings as 'expressions of enormous local civic pride that help bind communities together.' Too much is lost when they are sold whilst achieving very little. Unfortunately, those working to stave off this fire sale of our heritage have been further undermined by the previous government when they proposed to allow councils to sell off 'investment properties' to meet budget shortfalls - without the need for government approval. It will be interesting to see if the new government runs with this idea. Let's hope they don't because according to John Grogan, former MP for Ilkley, 'selling at speed never tends to give best value' whilst the loss of such assets will limit the ability of councils to 'shape and encourage economic regeneration in the future'. Sutton council please note.

Sources: The Guardian/Rowan More - <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/article/2024/may/26/councils-selling-historical-buildings-liverpool-municipal-nottingham-castle-ilkley-arcade>



Reminder: A chance to see

Bramblehaw Summer House

Bramblehaw Cottage, 40 Westcroft Road, Carshalton, SM5 2TG

Sunday 15th September between 10.30am and 1pm.

Don't miss this opportunity to see this fascinating little building, which was originally within the grounds of Bramble Haw Mansion. Thanks to the generosity of its present owners, you can visit this little gem during London Open House and Heritage Open Days. Andrew Skelton will be on hand for questions and tea & biscuits will be available, the profits going to Fairtrade Sutton.

Stone Court



The Stone Court Mansion House from the conveyance from Scawen to Andrews in 1785/Sutton Archives 2361/1/1

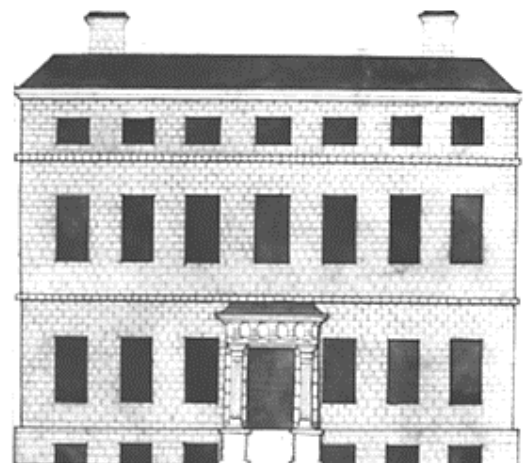
Many of you will have enjoyed wandering by the Lower Pond and along the canal that runs through the Grove in Carshalton. If you enter the park near the junction of North Street and Mill Lane, you'll pass a group of buildings known as Stone Court. The pond, park and these buildings are the remnants of an estate that has its origins as far back as the 13th century.

An archaeological dig in 1995 uncovered fragments of a 13th century stone building in the former walled kitchen garden to the Dower House, now the western car park extension by the Grove. These were the remains of the first and earliest Stone Court. Subsequently, the name was given to a succession of houses, although when the Gaynesford family owned the estate, it acquired the alternative name of Gaynesford Place.

The Gaynesfords held the property for about two hundred years until it was sold in the late 16th century for £1000. It passed through various hands, including the Burrish family, who built a new house some distance from the original Stone Court. When John Cator, a London merchant, bought the estate for £4100 in 1693, he swept away all the Burrish buildings and began to build a new house and re-configure the grounds. This included straightening Mill Lane and changing the course of the Wandle. The construction of the house and the re-modelling of the grounds seems to have become an



Above: the front of Cator's Stone Court Mansion facing south. Below: the north side/ Sutton Archives



obsession as he used not only the money from his wife's marriage settlement but continued to borrow extensively to fund the work, including from the Scawens. Through his wife he was connected to Sir Thomas Scawen (d.1730) and his brother, the powerful financier Sir William Scawen.

His new domain stretched north-east from the corner of Mill Lane and North Street to Butter Hill and the copper mills - and south from the same corner to the High Street/Pound Street and the churchyard. By 1702, his energetic building had already cost about £10,000 but it wasn't until 1710 that he finally moved into the still unfinished house. Cator reckoned that another £50 was needed to complete the work!

An inventory made in 1725 gives an idea of the internal arrangement of the house. A best bed chamber was mentioned as well as John Cator's bed-chamber, room no 4 (a bedchamber), the Great Room, the Passage and Long Room, six rooms on the

first floor as well as a kitchen and other offices, the gardens, outhouses, stables and barns. The servants were housed in the attics.

After Cator's death in 1725, the house was eventually sold to Sir Thomas Scawen's son Thomas in 1729. The Scawens lived there whilst planning their grand palace in Carshalton Park which, because of Scawen's profligacy, was never built. To pay off Scawen's debts Stone Court was again sold in the 1780s only to be demolished in 1800, along with its renowned grove of trees. Fortunately for us, however, much still survives from that time in the landscape of today's Grove park.

Sue Horne

Sources:

'Evidence for the development of Stone Court and its estate, 1590-1839' by **Andrew Skelton**

'The Structure of Stone Court Mansion House and the water level in Carshalton Lower Pond' by **John Phillips**/revised July 2022/CADHAS



An illustration from James Edwards' 'A Companion from London to Brighthelmston' 1787 shows the south east view of Samuel Long's House which was situated close to Mill Lane. It has been suggested that the building in the background is Stone Court Mansion and its outbuildings. The outbuildings still exist and today are known as Stone Court. When Stone Court mansion was demolished, it was said that the chimney piece which stood in the hall and supposedly bought from Nonsuch Palace, was purchased by Samuel Farmer Esq, and put up in the house he was building in Nonsuch Park.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We'd like to hear from you. Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome.

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